

Masonic Minutes—February Two

Scottish Rite Freemasonry

The Scottish Rite is one of the two branches of Freemasonry in which a Master Mason may proceed after he has completed the three degrees of Symbolic or Blue Lodge Masonry. The other branch is known as the York Rite. The Scottish Rite includes degrees from the 4° to the 33°. This Rite further builds on the allegoric story of Temple of Solomon builders, taking the initiate through multiple lessons, or degrees, that further develop the strength of character necessary for one to be spiritually elevated above the physical world. They are lessons in rational thought, chivalry and self-sacrifice; expressing the highest expectations for behavior and providing standards to which every man should aspire.

The use of the word “Scottish” has led many Masons to believe that the Rite originated in Scotland. There was also a false belief for many years that a man had to go to Scotland to receive the 33°. Neither of these statements is true. Actually, the first reference to the Rite appears in old French records where the word “Ecosais,” meaning Scottish, is found. During the latter part of the 17th Century, when the British Isles were torn by strife, many Scots fled to France and resumed their Masonic interests in that country. It is believed that this influence contributed to the use of the word “Scottish.”

In 1732, the first “Ecosais,” or Scottish Lodge, was organized in Bordeaux, one of the oldest and most influential Masonic centers in France. The membership included Scottish and English Masons. In 1761, certain Masonic authorities in France granted a patent to Stephen Morin of Bordeaux to carry the advanced degrees across the sea to America. In 1763, Morin established these degrees in the French possessions in the West Indies. What he established consisted of a system of 25 so-called higher degrees which flourished in France, and which were known as the “Rite of Perfection.” Within a few years after 1763, other degrees were added, until the Rite had a ritual structure of 33 degrees — the first three being exemplified in a Symbolic Lodge, if a Grand Lodge with subordinate Lodges existed in the area.

On May 31, 1801, the Supreme Council of the Thirty-third degree for the United States of America — the first Scottish Rite Supreme Council in the world was founded in Charleston, South Carolina. Its aim was to unify groups and to bring Masonic order out of chaos. The Scottish Rite has since spread throughout the world.

One important point recognized by all Masons is the fact that the Scottish Rite shares the belief of all Masonic organizations that there is no higher degree than that of Master Mason. The Supreme Council and its subordinate bodies acknowledge the Masonic supremacy of the Symbolic Grand Lodges, and the Grand Master of Masons is recognized as the ranking Masonic officer present when in attendance at any Scottish Rite meeting. The Scottish Rite degrees are in addition to and are in no way “higher” than Blue Lodge degrees. Scottish Rite work amplifies and elaborates on the lessons of the Craft. It should never be forgotten that termination of a member’s Symbolic Lodge standing automatically terminates his Scottish Rite membership, whether his rank be 14° or 33°.

If you are interested in learning more about Scottish Rite masonry, please talk with a member of your lodge who is also an active member of the Scottish Rite. Or, you can visit one of the following websites for Valleys in Missouri: <http://scottishrite-stl.org/>, <http://www.joplinaasr.com/>, <http://www.scottishrite-stjo.org/>, <http://www.srkc.org/>, or <http://scottishrite-columbia.org/>.